

**Appropriations Committee
February 10, 2010
(Charter Oak State College)**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is **Patricia Martin** and I reside in the town of New Britain. I am here to testify about Charter Oak State College.

I hold an Associates Degree from Tunxis Community College. Upon the advice of one of my professors, I enrolled in Charter Oak State College in 2005 in order to pursue a Bachelor Degree. At the time I was juggling responsibilities of single parenting, owning a dance studio business, that I was in the process of re-tooling to create a non-profit, children-to-children performance company.

The Company would offer workshops and performance opportunities to youth who would otherwise have difficulty in accessing them.

Over the span of more than 25 years in the performing arts field, I observed how the majority of my dance/theater students were also high academic achievers. This was most evidenced and easy to document in students who had various learning challenges.

In 2006 Children's Dance Theater Connection was incorporated as a 501(c)(3). It began work in New Britain with inner-city youth offering after school programming, that afforded hundreds of children an opportunity to participate in the performing arts. Unfortunately despite wonderful successes over four years, and special recognition from the City of New Britain and the Board of Education, our small Company of 25 members, did not weather the economic downturn with decreased funding support. In July of 2009 the performing and teaching arm of the Company was suspended and I was laid off as Executive Artistic Director. I thought my long-range dream of developing cost-effective performing arts programming to work as an adjunct to traditional academic education was over.

I was now among the thousands of displayed, laid off workers in the State. It was quite by accident, I found information on the Department of Labor's Website concerning the availability of funds for college through the WIA program. The three areas of funding were in Project Management, Health and Paralegal Services. Given my background, I chose Project Management and was delighted to see it offered at Charter Oak. The current demand on WIA resulted in a long process and I lost two registration opportunities.

Upon further research, I discovered that WIA funded early education and after school programs, but only with special permission through a complicated grant process. I was told these programs were not automatically funded by WIA. The field was not considered robust in offering employment opportunities. The chance for obtaining the grant award was slim.

Knowing the need for early education and after-school programming, together with the numbers of people out of work, who have demonstrated their capability, industry and work ethic by having already earned a degree, I found the problems associated with funding these programs to be disappointing. The loss of not being able to marry resources and needs to opportunity was sad.

However, not being easily dissuaded from my dream, I contacted Doris Cassiday, my Charter Oak academic advisor who connected me with Carole Weisbeg, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Youth Programs. She, together with Marlene Woodman, Assistant to the President and Government Relations, encouraged me to pursue the WIA grant and offered their support.